

VZCZCXRO2194
RR RUEHGR
DE RUEHWN #1530/01 3481526
ZNR UUUUU ZZH
R 141526Z DEC 07
FM AMEMBASSY BRIDGETOWN
TO RUEHC/SECSTATE WASHDC 5918
INFO RUCNCOM/EC CARICOM COLLECTIVE
RUEHCV/AMEMBASSY CARACAS 1834
RUEHDG/AMEMBASSY SANTO DOMINGO 5881
RUHMFIUU/DEPT OF HOMELAND SECURITY WASHINGTON DC
RUEAORD/CUSTOMS CARIBBEAN ATTACHE MIAMI FL
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SOUTHCOM ALSO FOR POLAD
DEPT FOR PRM-DENZEL
DEPT FOR G/TIP-TAYLOR AND BRESNAHAN
DEPT FOR DRL-MAGGIO
DHS FOR CARIBBEAN ATTACHE-LEPORE

E.O. 12958: N/A

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SUBJECT: THE SEX INDUSTRY AS A POTENTIAL AVENUE FOR
TRAFFICKING IN PERSONS IN ST. LUCIA

REF: BRIDGETOWN 263

11. (U) SUMMARY: Various government officials and NGO representatives are recognizing the possible existence of trafficking victims in St. Lucia, particularly in the commercial sex industry. Most foreign prostitutes fulfill some technical elements of trafficking, even if they are willing participants who do not feel coerced or imprisoned. However, circumstantial and anecdotal evidence suggests that more serious trafficking may exist in more "underground" establishments. END SUMMARY

12. (SBU) PolOff gained the following information through various meetings in October 2007 with the Gender Relations Division, HIV/AIDS outreach office, and Human Services Division, all in the Ministry of Health, as well as the St. Lucia Planned Parenthood Association, the Caribbean Association for Feminist Research and Action (CAFRA), and members of the press.

13. (U) Trafficking in persons appears to exist in St. Lucia's active sex industry, but might not meet the 100 victims threshold under the Trafficking Victims Protection Act. Trafficking appears to occur in three different ways: 1) in "transparent" clubs of prostitution, where most employees do not see themselves as coerced or enslaved, 2) less transparent clubs where the trafficking is pushed underground, and 3) the participation of minors in transactional sex. Although no cases are currently documented, anecdotal and historical evidence from gender issues experts is significant.

TRANSPARENT CLUBS

14. (SBU) According to various government officials and NGO representatives, formal prostitution is handled out of brothels, strip clubs, or similar venues for commercial sex. The vast majority of formal commercial sex workers are from the Dominican Republic, with a few from other Caribbean islands. Even though prostitution is illegal in St. Lucia, a few clubs are open to government assistance and outreach for education on HIV/AIDS, condoms, and health awareness. PolOff

learned in a meeting with Gender Relations and CAFRA that these same clubs seem to consider their employees as an investment, enforcing the worker's right to insist on condom usage and not tolerating abusive customers.

15. (SBU) Most women working out of "transparent" clubs have the characteristics of economic migrants, fully aware of and willing to do the work involved in order to support families in the Dominican Republic. However, these commercial sex workers share a few characteristics with trafficking victims, namely the surrendering of their passports to their new employer until they are able to repay the transportation costs. CAFRA, Gender Relations, and a press contact confirmed to PolOff that, in St. Lucia, this is not a source of long-term servitude. Most women are able to repay the debt and retrieve their passports within a month or two, after which they are free to return home or even find work at a different club. Gender Relations confirmed that at least one of these clubs expelled workers when learning the girls were under-aged.

16. (SBU) In a meeting with CAFRA and Gender Relations, though, PolOff learned that not all women flown over from the Dominican Republic are aware of the work expected of them. Those who are unaware are also expected to repay their debt before returning home, clearly making these women trafficking victims for a short time. In addition to the passport issue, workers must rely on their employers to extend their residence period with immigration authorities, a fact that demands considerable cooperation.

THE DARKER CORNERS

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17. (U) A few of these clubs are open to outside assistance, but experts agree that the majority of clubs keep their doors closed to any outreach, rendering involved NGOs and government offices unable to evaluate conditions or the existence of trafficking. Limited anecdotal evidence has lead a few experts to believe trafficking victims exists in this environment. Gender Relations shared with PolOff a case from early 2007 in which an immigration official suspected irregular migration of women into St. Lucia. As a result of her International Organization of Migration (IOM) training, the officer handed the women a phone number to call if they ran into a problem. These women learned that the conditions and nature of work were not as they expected, called the officer, and received help getting out of the situation within 24 hours of arriving in St. Lucia.

18. (U) There are also rumors and historical experiences among experts that prostituting minors, both male and female, has existed at the less transparent institutions. Researchers are unable to glean information from workers susceptible to outreach because workers from the various clubs do not intermingle with each other or share information about their working conditions.

TRANSACTIONAL SEX

19. (SBU) Transactional sex also presents potential trafficking issues. According to the experts on this issue, these cases tend to involve 15 to 24 year old women providing services to men over 40 for money, meals, jewelry, cell phones, and other goods. There is no place of business to raid or manager to arrest in cracking down on this form of commercial sex. Many participants are voluntary, making it difficult to find elements of trafficking, even if under-aged. Others become dependent or enslaved in a transactional relationship, be it emotionally, financially, or through fear of abuse. Various agencies, including Gender Relations, confirmed that there are also cases of impoverished parents pushing their children into

transactional sex as a source of family income. (Note: Transactional sex is common throughout the Eastern Caribbean, as are cases of participants becoming dependent and impoverished parents pushing children into such relationships. End Note.)

CURRENT PROGRESS

¶10. (U) The Gender Relations Division, which heads the St. Lucian anti-trafficking coalition (reftel), is taking measures to identify victims and even help victims identify themselves as victims. With assistance from IOM, funded by PRM, St. Lucia is establishing a hotline for trafficking victims and advertising it through various public service announcements. Such a hotline is crucial in St. Lucia because sex workers generally do not trust police or immigration officers because members of these divisions tend to comprise a significant amount of customers. Also, the GOSL recently funded a research assistant position in the Gender Relations Division, who will focus on gathering empirical data on possible trafficking victims.

¶11. (U) Although PolOff's initial research focused on trafficking victims in the sex industry, the GOSL recognizes that more victims might exist in other labor sectors, such as construction, particularly with the recent increase of Chinese laborers. The Gender Relations Division, as head of the government's anti-trafficking coalition, plans to research this issue, as well.

COMMENT-HOW WE CAN HELP

¶12. (U) In the Eastern Caribbean, St. Lucia is one of the most proactive countries to identify and combat trafficking in persons. The country has done considerable work in

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establishing methods of operation for handling potential victims. However, its resources are limited, hampering the extent to which it can identify victims. Assistance to identify victims, including empirical research, is the GOSL's chief request.

HOWARD